

"Our fresh spinach producers responded admirably last fall at the first sign of trouble. Now we need to do what we can to help them recover from voluntarily pulling so much product off the shelves and ensure that our best researchers are working to increase the safety of the fresh spinach and lettuce we all enjoy. When so many doctors and parents are concerned about obesity and harmful eating habits among American adults and children, we need to do everything possible to make sure consumers are not turned off to one of the healthiest foods out there, spinach," said Rep. Farr.

Farr's bill, H.R. 912, the Spinach Research and Recovery Act, authorizes \$26 million for food safety research specifically dedicated to fresh produce, as well additional funds for emergency assistance to producers and handlers of fresh spinach who suffered losses when they voluntarily pulled fresh spinach from markets in reaction to the FDA's public health advisory issued in September, 2006.

The top American researchers in the fresh produce safety field are already in place at the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition within the FDA, but current funding levels are not sufficient to meet the urgent need for additional research in response to the E. coli outbreak.

This bill is identical to a bill Farr introduced at the end of the last Congress. The bill has six bipartisan original co-sponsors: Reps. Cardoza, Costa, Filner, Gilchrest, Lofgren and Salazar.

"By introducing this bill and working as a member of the House Agriculture Appropriations Subcommittee, I will continue to ensure the food safety concerns of spinach consumers and producers alike are well represented in congressional negotiations over funding and new regulations," added Rep. Farr.

Following the E. coli outbreak of Sept. of 2006, the FDA has lifted their public health advisory on all fresh spinach products dated after Oct. 1, 2006 and is compiling a final investigation report.